Efficient genome searching with Biostrings and the BSgenome data packages

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Contents

L	The Biostrings-based genome data packages	1
2	Finding an arbitrary nucleotide pattern in a chromosome	2
3	Finding an arbitrary nucleotide pattern in an entire genome	5
1	Some precautions when using matchPattern	g
5	Masking the chromosome sequences	10
3	Hard masking	15
7	Injecting known SNPs in the chromosome sequences	15
3	Finding all the patterns of a constant width dictionary in an entire genome	15
)	Session info	17

1 The Biostrings-based genome data packages

The Bioconductor project provides data packages that contain the full genome sequences of a given organism. These packages are called *Biostrings-based genome data packages* because the sequences they contain are stored in some of the basic containers defined in the Biostrings package, like the *DNAString*, the *DNAStringSet* or the *MaskedDNAString* containers. Regardless of the particular sequence data that they contain, all the Biostrings-based genome data packages are very similar and can be manipulated in a consistent and easy way. They all require the BSgenome package in order to work properly. This package, unlike the Biostrings-based genome data packages, is a software package that provides the infrastructure needed to support them (this is why the Biostrings-based genome data packages are also called *BSgenome data packages*). The BSgenome package itself requires the Biostrings package.

See the man page for the available.genomes function (?available.genomes) for more information about how to get the list of all the BSgenome data packages currently available in your version of Bioconductor (you need an internet connection so that available.genomes can query the Bioconductor package repositories).

More genomes can be added if necessary. Note that the process of making a BSgenome data package is not yet documented but you are welcome to ask for help on the bioc-devel mailing list (http://bioconductor.org/docs/mailList.html) if you need a genome that is not yet available.

2 Finding an arbitrary nucleotide pattern in a chromosome

In this section we show how to find (or just count) the occurences of some arbitrary nucleotide pattern in a chromosome. The basic tool for this is the matchPattern (or countPattern) function from the Biostrings package.

First we need to install and load the BSgenome data package for the organism that we want to look at. In our case, we want to search chromosome I of *Caenorhabditis elegans*.

UCSC provides several versions of the C. elegans genome: ce1, ce2 and ce4. These versions correspond to different *releases* from WormBase, which are the WS100, WS120 and WS170 releases, respectively. See http://genome.ucsc.edu/FAQ/FAQreleases#release1 for the list of all UCSC genome releases and for the correspondance between UCSC versions and release names.

The BSgenome data package for the ce2 genome is BSgenome.Celegans.UCSC.ce2. Note that ce1 and ce4 are not available in Bioconductor but they could be added if there is demand for them.

See ?available.genomes for how to install BSgenome.Celegans.UCSC.ce2. Then load the package and display the single object defined in it:

```
> library(BSgenome.Celegans.UCSC.ce2)
> ls("package:BSgenome.Celegans.UCSC.ce2")
[1] "Celegans"
> Celegans
Worm genome
| organism: Caenorhabditis elegans (Worm)
| provider: UCSC
| provider version: ce2
| release date: Mar. 2004
| release name: WormBase v. WS120
| single sequences (see '?seqnames'):
    chrI
            chrII
                    chrIII chrIV
                                     chrV
                                                     chrM
                                             chrX
| multiple sequences (see '?mseqnames'):
    upstream1000 upstream2000 upstream5000
 (use the '$' or '[[' operator to access a given sequence)
  Celegans is a BSgenome object:
> class(Celegans)
[1] "BSgenome"
attr(,"package")
[1] "BSgenome"
```

When displayed, some basic information about the origin of the genome is shown (organism, provider, provider version, etc...) followed by the index of *single* sequences and eventually an additional index of *multiple* sequences. Methods (adequately called *accessor methods*) are defined for individual access to this information:

```
> organism(Celegans)
```

- [1] "Caenorhabditis elegans"
- > provider(Celegans)
- [1] "UCSC"
- > providerVersion(Celegans)
- [1] "ce2"
- > seqnames(Celegans)
- [1] "chrI" "chrII" "chrIII" "chrIV" "chrV" "chrX" "chrM"
- > mseqnames(Celegans)
- [1] "upstream1000" "upstream2000" "upstream5000"

See the man page for the BSgenome class (?BSgenome) for a complete list of accessor methods and their descriptions.

Now we are ready to display chromosome I:

> Celegans\$chrI

```
15080483-letter "DNAString" instance seq: GCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAA
```

Note that this chrI sequence corresponds to the forward strand (aka direct or sense or positive or plus strand) of chromosome I. UCSC, and genome providers in general, don't provide files containing the nucleotide sequence of the reverse strand (aka indirect or antisense or negative or minus or opposite strand) of the chromosomes because these sequences can be deduced from the forward sequences by taking their reverse complements. The BSgenome data packages are no exceptions: they only provide the forward strand sequence of every chromosome. See ?reverseComplement for more details about the reverse complement of a DNAString object. It is important to remember that, in practice, the reverse strand sequence is almost never needed. The reason is that, in fact, a reverse strand analysis can (and should) always be transposed into a forward strand analysis. Therefore trying to compute the reverse strand sequence of an entire chromosome by applying reverseComplement to its forward strand sequence is almost always a bad idea. See the Finding an arbitrary nucleotide pattern in an entire genome section of this document for how to find arbitrary patterns in the reverse strand of a chromosome.

The number of bases in this sequence can be retrieved with:

- > chrI <- Celegans\$chrI
- > length(chrI)
- [1] 15080483

Some basic stats:

> afI <- alphabetFrequency(chrI)

> afI

Α	C	G	T	M	R	W	S	Y	K
4838561	2697177	2693544	4851201	0	0	0	0	0	0
V	H	D	В	N	-	+			
0	0	0	0	0	0	0			

```
> sum(afI) == length(chrI)
[1] TRUE
   Count all exact matches of pattern "ACCCAGGGC":
> p1 <- "ACCCAGGGC"
> countPattern(p1, chrI)
[1] 0
   Like most pattern matching functions in Biostrings, the countPattern and matchPattern functions
support inexact matching. One form of inexact matching is to allow a few mismatching letters per match.
Here we allow at most one:
> countPattern(p1, chrI, max.mismatch=1)
[1] 235
   With the matchPattern function, the locations of the matches are stored in an XString Views object:
> m1 <- matchPattern(p1, chrI, max.mismatch=1)</pre>
> m1[4:6]
  Views on a 15080483-letter DNAString subject
subject: GCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCT...AGGCTTAGGCTTAGGCTTAGGCTTAGGCTTAGGC
views:
     start
               end width
[1] 187350 187358
                        9 [ACCCAAGGC]
[2] 213236 213244
                        9 [ACCCAGGGG]
[3] 424133 424141
                        9 [ACCCAGGAC]
> class(m1)
[1] "XStringViews"
attr(,"package")
[1] "Biostrings"
   The mismatch function (new in Biostrings 2) returns the positions of the mismatching letters for each
match:
> mismatch(p1, m1[4:6])
[[1]]
[1] 6
[[2]]
[1] 9
[[3]]
[1] 8
```

Note: The mismatch method is in fact a particular case of a (vectorized) alignment function where only "replacements" are allowed. Current implementation is slow but this will be addressed.

It may happen that a match is *out of limits* like in this example:

```
> p2 <- DNAString("AAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAA")
> m2 <- matchPattern(p2, chrI, max.mismatch=2)
> m2[1:4]
  Views on a 15080483-letter DNAString subject
subject: GCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAAGCCT...AGGCTTAGGCTTAGGCTTAGGCTTAGGCTTAGGC
views:
    start end width
                 20 [ GCCTAAGCCTAAGCCTAA]
[1]
      -1 18
[2]
        5 24
                 20 [AAGCCTAAGCCTAA]
[3]
       11 30
                 20 [AAGCCTAAGCCTAA]
[4]
                 20 [AAGCCTAAGCCTAA]
       17
          36
> p2 == m2[1:4]
[1] FALSE TRUE TRUE TRUE
> mismatch(p2, m2[1:4])
[[1]]
[1] 1 2
[[2]]
integer(0)
[[3]]
integer(0)
[[4]]
integer(0)
   The list of exact matches and the list of inexact matches can both be obtained with:
> m2[p2 == m2]
> m2[p2 != m2]
   Note that the length of m2[p2 == m2] should be equal to countPattern(p2, chrI, max.mismatch=0).
```

3 Finding an arbitrary nucleotide pattern in an entire genome

5 Finding an arbitrary nucleotide pattern in an entire genome

Now we want to extend our analysis to the *forward* and *reverse* strands of all the C. elegans chromosomes. More precisely, here is the analysis we want to perform:

- The input dictionary: Our input is a dictionary of 50 patterns. Each pattern is a short nucleotide sequence of 15 to 25 bases (As, Cs, Gs and Ts only, no Ns). It is stored in a FASTA file called "ce2dict0.fa". See the Finding all the patterns of a constant width dictionary in an entire genome section of this document for a very efficient way to deal with the special case where all the patterns in the input dictionary have the same length.
- The target: Our target (or subject) is the *forward* and *reverse* strands of the seven C. elegans chromosomes (14 sequences in total). We want to find and report all occurences (or hits) of every pattern in the target. Note that a given pattern can have 0, 1 or several hits in 0, 1 or 2 strands of 0, 1 or several chromosomes.

- Exact or inexact matching? We are interested in exact matches only (for now).
- The output: We want to put the results of this analysis in a file so we can send it to our collaborators for some post analysis work. Our collaborators are not necessarily familiar with R or Bioconductor so dumping a high-level R object (like a list or a data frame) into an .rda file is not an option. For maximum portability (one of our collaborators wants to use Microsoft Excel for the post analysis) we choose to put our results in a tabulated file where one line describes one hit. The columns (or fields) of this file will be (in this order):
 - sequame: the name of the chromosome where the hit occurs.
 - start: an integer giving the starting position of the hit.
 - end: an integer giving the ending position of the hit.
 - strand: a plus (+) for a hit in the positive strand or a minus (-) for a hit in the negative strand.
 - patternID: we use the unique ID provided for every pattern in the "ce2dict0.fa" file.

Let's start by loading the input dictionary with:

```
> ce2dict0_file <- system.file("extdata", "ce2dict0.fa", package="BSgenome")
> ce2dict0 <- read.DNAStringSet(ce2dict0_file, "fasta")</pre>
> ce2dict0
 A DNAStringSet instance of length 50
     width seq
                                                               names
 [1]
        18 GCGAAACTAGGAGAGGCT
                                                               pattern01
 [2]
        25 CTGTTAGCTAATTTTAAAAATAAAT
                                                               pattern02
 [3]
        24 ACTACCACCCAAATTTAGATATTC
                                                               pattern03
 [4]
        24 AAATTTTTTTTTTGTTGCAAATTTGA
                                                               pattern04
 [5]
        25 TCTTCTTGGCTTTGGTGGTACTTTT
                                                               pattern05
 [6]
        16 AACAATTATCTATAAT
                                                               pattern06
 [7]
        22 GGTTTTGGAGAGTGATGCACGT
                                                               pattern07
 [8]
        21 TTTAATGAACCCCAGCAACTC
                                                               pattern08
 [9]
        18 TACTGAAACTCCCGCGAG
                                                               pattern09
[42]
        22 AAAATAAGATTCTATTAAAATA
                                                               pattern42
Γ431
        15 GTTTTAATTCTAATT
                                                               pattern43
Γ441
        18 CATCGTTTCAACCGTTCG
                                                               pattern44
Γ451
        19 TAAAAAATCAAAACTTTTG
                                                               pattern45
Γ461
        24 TTTTGAACAAGCATGTCTAACTA
                                                               pattern46
[47]
        20 TAAACGAATTTAGGATATAT
                                                               pattern47
Γ48]
        19 AAGGACCAGGATTGGCACG
                                                               pattern48
Γ491
        24 AAATAACTGCGTAAAAACACAATA
                                                               pattern49
[50]
        22 AAAATGCCGGAGCATTTTAAAG
                                                               pattern50
```

Here is how we can write the functions that will perform our analysis:

```
> writeHits <- function(seqname, matches, strand, file="", append=FALSE)
+ {
+     if (file.exists(file) && !append)
+         warning("existing file ", file, " will be overwritten with 'append=FALSE'")
+     if (!file.exists(file) && append)
+         warning("new file ", file, " will have no header with 'append=TRUE'")
+     hits <- data.frame(seqname=rep.int(seqname, length(matches)),</pre>
```

```
start=start(matches),
                          end=end(matches),
                          strand=rep.int(strand, length(matches)),
                          patternID=names(matches),
                          check.names=FALSE)
+
      write.table(hits, file=file, append=append, quote=FALSE, sep="\t",
+
                   row.names=FALSE, col.names=!append)
+ }
> runAnalysis1 <- function(dict0, outfile="")
  {
+
      library(BSgenome.Celegans.UCSC.ce2)
+
      seqnames <- seqnames(Celegans)</pre>
      seqnames_in1string <- paste(seqnames, collapse=", ")</pre>
+
      cat("Target:", providerVersion(Celegans),
           "chromosomes", segnames_in1string, "\n")
      append <- FALSE
      for (segname in segnames) {
          subject <- Celegans[[seqname]]</pre>
          cat(">>> Finding all hits in chromosome", seqname, "...\n")
          for (i in seq_len(length(dict0))) {
              patternID <- names(dict0)[i]</pre>
              pattern <- dict0[[i]]</pre>
              plus_matches <- matchPattern(pattern, subject)</pre>
              names(plus_matches) <- rep.int(patternID, length(plus_matches))</pre>
               writeHits(seqname, plus_matches, "+", file=outfile, append=append)
               append <- TRUE
               rcpattern <- reverseComplement(pattern)</pre>
               minus_matches <- matchPattern(rcpattern, subject)</pre>
               names(minus_matches) <- rep.int(patternID, length(minus_matches))</pre>
               writeHits(seqname, minus_matches, "-", file=outfile, append=append)
          }
+
          cat(">>> DONE\n")
      }
+ }
```

Some important notes about the implementation of the runAnalysis1 function:

- subject <- Celegans [[seqname]] is the code that actually loads a chromosome sequence into memory. Using only one sequence at a time is a good practice to avoid memory allocation problems on a machine with a limited amount of memory. For example, loading all the human chromosome sequences in memory would require more than 3GB of memory!
- We have 2 nested for loops: the outer loop walks thru the target (7 chromosomes) and the inner loop walks thru the set of patterns. Doing the other way around would be very inefficient, especially with a bigger number of patterns because this would require to load each chromosome sequence into memory as many times as the number of patterns. runAnalysis1 loads each sequence only once.
- We find the matches in the minus strand (minus_matches) by first taking the reverse complement of the current pattern (with rcpattern <- reverseComplement(pattern)) and NOT by taking the reverse complement of the current subject.

Now we are ready to run the analysis and put the results in the "ce2dict0_ana1.txt" file:

```
> runAnalysis1(ce2dict0, outfile="ce2dict0_ana1.txt")
```

```
Target: ce2 chromosomes chrI, chrII, chrIII, chrIV, chrV, chrX, chrM
>>> Finding all hits in chromosome chrI ...
>>> DONE
>>> Finding all hits in chromosome chrII ...
>>> DONE
>>> Finding all hits in chromosome chrIII ...
>>> DONE
>>> Finding all hits in chromosome chrIV ...
>>> DONE
>>> Finding all hits in chromosome chrV ...
>>> DONE
>>> Finding all hits in chromosome chrX ...
>>> DONE
>>> Finding all hits in chromosome chrM ...
>>> DONE
   Here is some very simple example of post analysis:
   • Get the total number of hits:
     > hits1 <- read.table("ce2dict0_ana1.txt", header=TRUE)</pre>
     > nrow(hits1)
     [1] 79
   • Get the number of hits per chromosome:
     > table(hits1$seqname)
       chrI chrIII chrIV
                                           chrV
                                                  chrX
         11
                 5
                       16
                                                    16
                                             15
   • Get the number of hits per pattern:
     > hits1_table <- table(hits1$patternID)</pre>
     > hits1_table
     pattern01 pattern02 pattern03 pattern04 pattern06 pattern07 pattern08 pattern09
                                            1
                                                      2
     pattern10 pattern11 pattern12 pattern13 pattern14 pattern15 pattern16 pattern17
     pattern18 pattern19 pattern20 pattern21 pattern22 pattern23 pattern24 pattern25
                       9
                                           10
                                                      2
                                                                 1
     pattern26 pattern27 pattern28 pattern29 pattern30 pattern31 pattern32 pattern33
                                                       1
     pattern34 pattern35 pattern36 pattern37 pattern38 pattern39 pattern40 pattern41
                                            7
                                                      1
     pattern42 pattern43 pattern44 pattern45 pattern46 pattern47 pattern48 pattern49
     pattern50
```

• Get the pattern(s) with the higher number of hits:

```
> hits1_table[hits1_table == max(hits1_table)] # pattern(s) with more hits
 pattern21
         10
• Get the pattern(s) with no hits:
  > setdiff(names(ce2dict0), hits1$patternID) # pattern(s) with no hits
  [1] "pattern05"
• And finally a function that can be used to plot the hits:
  > plotGenomeHits <- function(bsgenome, segnames, hits)
  + {
        chrlengths <- seqlengths(bsgenome)[seqnames]</pre>
        XMAX <- max(chrlengths)</pre>
        YMAX <- length(seqnames)
        plot.new()
        plot.window(c(1, XMAX), c(0, YMAX))
        axis(1)
        axis(2, at=seq_len(length(seqnames)), labels=rev(seqnames), tick=FALSE, las=1)
        ## Plot the chromosomes
        for (i in seq_len(length(seqnames)))
             lines(c(1, chrlengths[i]), c(YMAX + 1 - i, YMAX + 1 - i), type="l")
        ## Plot the hits
        for (i in seq_len(nrow(hits))) {
            seqname <- hits$seqname[i]</pre>
            y0 <- YMAX + 1 - match(seqname, seqnames)
            if (hits$strand[i] == "+") {
                 y \leftarrow y0 + 0.05
                 col <- "red"
            } else {
                 y \leftarrow y0 - 0.05
                 col <- "blue"
            lines(c(hits$start[i], hits$end[i]), c(y, y), type="1", col=col, lwd=3)
        }
  + }
 Plot the hits found by runAnalysis1 with:
```

4 Some precautions when using *matchPattern*

> plotGenomeHits(Celegans, seqnames(Celegans), hits1)

Improper use of matchPattern (or countPattern) can affect performance.

If needed, the *matchPattern* and *countPattern* methods convert their first argument (the pattern) to an object of the same class than their second argument (the subject) before they pass it to the subroutine that actually implements the fast search algorithm.

So if you need to reuse the same pattern a high number of times, it's a good idea to convert it *before* to pass it to the *matchPattern* or *countPattern* method. This way the conversion is done only once:

```
> library(hgu95av2probe)
> tmpseq <- DNAStringSet(hgu95av2probe$sequence)
> someStats <- function(v)
+
  {
+
      GC <- DNAString("GC")</pre>
+
      CG <- DNAString("CG")</pre>
+
      sapply(seq_len(length(v)),
              function(i) {
                   y <- v[[i]]
                   c(alphabetFrequency(y)[1:4],
                     GC=countPattern(GC, y),
                     CG=countPattern(CG, y))
              }
+
      )
+
  }
> someStats(tmpseq[1:10])
   [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6] [,7] [,8]
Α
                 6
                       4
                             4
                                  2
                                        4
                                             5
                                                   9
C
     10
            5
                  4
                       7
                             5
                                  7
                                       10
                                             8
                                                   7
                                                         10
G
      6
            5
                 3
                             8
                                                          4
Т
                                        7
      8
           10
                12
                             8
                                 10
                                             7
                                                          9
                       6
                                                   5
GC
      2
                 1
                       4
                             3
                                  2
                                        2
                                             2
                                                   1
                                                          1
CG
            0
                 Λ
                       2
                                             0
                                                          0
                             1
```

5 Masking the chromosome sequences

Starting with Bioconductor 2.2, the chromosome sequences in a *BSgenome data package* can have built-in masks. Starting with Bioconductor 2.3, there can be up to 4 built-in masks per sequence. These will always be (in this order): (1) the mask of assembly gaps, (2) the mask of intra-contig ambiguities, (3) the mask of repeat regions that were determined by the RepeatMasker software, and (4) the mask of repeat regions that were determined by the Tandem Repeats Finder software (where only repeats with period less than or equal to 12 were kept).

For a given package, all the sequences will always have the same number of masks.

```
> library(BSgenome.Hsapiens.UCSC.hg19)
> chrY <- Hsapiens$chrY
> chrY
  59373566-letter "MaskedDNAString" instance (# for masking)
masks:
 maskedwidth maskedratio active names
                                                            desc
                                                    assembly gaps
    33720000 0.567929506
                        TRUE AGAPS
1
2
          0 0.00000000
                        TRUE
                              AMB
                                    intra-contig ambiguities (empty)
3
    16024357 0.269890426 FALSE
                               RM
                                                     RepeatMasker
      587815 0.009900281 FALSE
                              TRF Tandem Repeats Finder [period<=12]
all masks together:
 maskedwidth maskedratio
    49783032
             0.8384713
all active masks together:
```

```
maskedwidth maskedratio
     33720000
                 0.5679295
> chrM <- Hsapiens$chrM
> chrM
  16571-letter "MaskedDNAString" instance (# for masking)
{\tt seq:} \ \ {\tt GATCACAGGTCTATCACCCTATTAACCACTCACGGG...AGCCCACACGTTCCCCTTAAATAAGACATCACGATG}
masks:
  maskedwidth maskedratio active names
                 0.0000000
                             TRUE AGAPS
1
            0
2
            0
                 0.0000000
                             TRUE
                                     AMB
3
          373
                 0.0225092 FALSE
                                      R.M
4
            0
                 0.000000 FALSE
                                     TRF
                                          desc
1
                        assembly gaps (empty)
2
            intra-contig ambiguities (empty)
                                  RepeatMasker
4 Tandem Repeats Finder [period<=12] (empty)
all masks together:
  maskedwidth maskedratio
          373
                 0.0225092
all active masks together:
  maskedwidth maskedratio
            0
```

The built-in masks are named consistenly across all the BSgenome data packages available in Bioconductor:

Name	Active by default	Short description	Long description
AGAPS	yes	assembly gaps	Masks the big N-blocks that have been placed between the con-
AMB	yes	intra-contig ambiguities	Masks any IUPAC ambiguity letter that was found in the conti
RM	no	RepeatMasker	Masks the repeat regions determined by the RepeatMasker soft
TRF	no	Tandem Repeats Finder	Masks the tandem repeat regions that were determined by the

Table 1: The built-in masks provided by the BSgenome data packages.

When displaying a masked sequence (here a *MaskedDNAString* object), the *masked width* and *masked ratio* are reported for each individual mask, as well as for all the masks together, and for all the active masks together. The *masked width* is the total number of nucleotide positions that are masked and the *masked ratio* is the *masked width* divided by the length of the sequence.

To activate a mask, use the *active* replacement method in conjonction with the *masks* method. For example, to activate the RepeatMasker mask, do:

```
2
            0.000000000
                            TRUE
                                   AMB
                                         intra-contig ambiguities (empty)
3
     16024357 0.269890426
                            TRUE
                                    RM
                                                             RepeatMasker
4
       587815 0.009900281 FALSE
                                   TRF Tandem Repeats Finder [period<=12]
all masks together:
 maskedwidth maskedratio
     49783032
               0.8384713
all active masks together:
 maskedwidth maskedratio
     49744357
                0.8378199
```

As you can see, the $masked\ width$ for all the active masks together (i.e. the total number of nucleotide positions that are masked by at least one active mask) is now the same as for the first mask. This represents a $masked\ ratio$ of about 83%.

Now when we use a function that is *mask aware*, like alphabetFrequency, the masked regions of the input sequence are ignored:

- > active(masks(chrY)) <- FALSE
- > active(masks(chrY))["AGAPS"] <- TRUE
- > alphabetFrequency(unmasked(chrY))

A	C	G	T	M	R	W	S
7667625	5099171	5153288	7733482	0	0	0	0
Y	K	V	Н	D	В	N	-
0	0	0	0	0	0	33720000	0
+							
0							

> alphabetFrequency(chrY)

Α	C	G	T	M	R	W	S	Y	K
7667625	5099171	5153288	7733482	0	0	0	0	0	0
Λ	H	D	В	N	_	+			
0	0	0	0	0	0	0			

This output indicates that, for this chromosome, the assembly gaps correspond exactly to the regions in the sequence that were filled with the letter N. Note that this is not always the case: sometimes Ns, and other IUPAC ambiguity letters, can be found inside the contigs.

When coercing a *MaskedXString* object to an *XStringViews* object, each non-masked region in the original sequence is converted into a view on the sequence:

> as(chrY, "XStringViews")

	start	end	width	
[1]	10001	44821	34821	[CTAACCCTAACCCTAATAGGTCTCATTGAGGACAGATA]
[2]	94822	181384	86563	[GATCCACCCATCTCGGTCTCCCTCGATCTCGTGACCTCGTGATC]
[3]	231385	997557	766173	[GATCGGGGTATCCCAGCTGCTATGTGATCCAAGGGACTGAATTC]
[4]	1047558	1084113	36556	[ATTAAAGAAGGAGAGAGACTGGGGTGTGTGTGTGCATGCATGCT]
[5]	1134114	1214234	80121	[GATTGAACCAGCCCACTCCACGCCTGGCCAACATGGGGAAACCC]
[6]	1264235	2018238	754004	[ATCCACCTGCCTCGGCCTCCTAAGTCATAACAAGAACCAAGATC]
[7]	2068239	8914955	6846717	[CCCTTCCAGGATGGTCCTTCTCAGGGATATATTAGCCAAAGCTT]

This can be used in conjonction with the gaps method to see the gaps between the views i.e. the masked regions themselves:

> gaps(as(chrY, "XStringViews"))

To extract the sizes of the assembly gaps:

> width(gaps(as(chrY, "XStringViews")))

[1]	10000	50000	50000	50000	50000	50000	50000	50000
[9]	50000	3000000	50000	50000	50000	50000	50000	30000000
[17]	50000	10000						

Note that, if applied directly to chrY, gaps returns a MaskedDNAString object with a single mask masking the regions that are not masked in the original object:

> gaps(chrY)

```
maskedwidth maskedratio active 1 25653566 0.4320705 TRUE
```

> alphabetFrequency(gaps(chrY))

Α	C	G	T	M	R	W	S
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Y	K	V	H	D	В	N	_
0	0	0	0	0	0 337	20000	0
+							
0							

In fact, for any MaskedDNAString object, the following should always be TRUE, whatever the masks are:

```
> af0 <- alphabetFrequency(unmasked(chrY))
> af1 <- alphabetFrequency(chrY)
> af2 <- alphabetFrequency(gaps(chrY))
> all(af0 == af1 + af2)
```

[1] TRUE

With all chrY masks active:

```
> active(masks(chrY)) <- TRUE
```

- > af1 <- alphabetFrequency(chrY)</pre>
- > af1

A	C	G	T	М	R	W	S	Y	K
2935249	1845512	1857214	2952559	0	0	0	0	0	0
V	Н	D	В	N	_	+			
0	0	0	0	0	0	0			

> gaps(chrY)

59373566-letter "MaskedDNAString" instance (# for masking)

maskedwidth maskedratio active 1 9590534 0.1615287 TRUE

> af2 <- alphabetFrequency(gaps(chrY))</pre>

> af2

A	C	G	T	М	R	W	S
4732376	3253659	3296074	4780923	0	0	0	0
Y	K	V	Н	D	В	N	_
0	0	0	0	0	0	33720000	0
+							
0							

> all(af0 == af1 + af2)

[1] TRUE

Now let's compare three different ways of finding all the occurences of the "CANNTG" consensus sequence in chrY. The Ns in this pattern need to be treated as wildcards i.e. they must match any letter in the subject.

Without the mask feature, the first way to do it would be to use the fixed=FALSE option in the call to matchPattern (or countPattern):

- > Ebox <- "CANNTG"
- > active(masks(chrY)) <- FALSE
- > countPattern(Ebox, chrY, fixed=FALSE)

[1] 33858401

The problem with this method is that the Ns in the subject are also treated as wildcards hence the abnormally high number of matches. A better method is to specify the *side* of the matching problem (i.e. *pattern* or *subject*) where the Ns should be treated as wildcards:

> countPattern(Ebox, chrY, fixed=c(pattern=FALSE, subject=TRUE))

[1] 138466

Finally, countPattern being *mask aware*, this can be achieved more efficiently by just masking the assembly gaps and ambiguities:

- > active(masks(chrY))[c("AGAPS", "AMB")] <- TRUE</pre>
- > alphabetFrequency(chrY, baseOnly=TRUE) # no ambiguities

```
Τ
                                    other
7667625 5099171 5153288 7733482
> countPattern(Ebox, chrY, fixed=FALSE)
[1] 138466
   Note that some chromosomes can have Ns outside the assembly gaps:
> chr2 <- Hsapiens$chr2
> active(masks(chr2))[-2] <- FALSE
> alphabetFrequency(gaps(chr2))
        C
   Α
                   Т
                                             γ
                                                                        В
                                                                             N
   0
        0
                                                                        0 2855
   +
   0
```

so it is recommended to always keep the AMB mask active (in addition to the AGAPS mask) whatever the sequence is.

Note that not all functions that work with an XString input are mask aware but more will be added in the near future. However, most of the times there is a alternate way to exclude some arbitrary regions from an analysis without having to use mask aware functions. This is described below in the Hard masking section.

6 Hard masking

coming soon...

7 Injecting known SNPs in the chromosome sequences

coming soon...

8 Finding all the patterns of a constant width dictionary in an entire genome

The matchPDict function can be used instead of matchPattern for the kind of analysis described in the Finding an arbitrary nucleotide pattern in an entire genome section but it will be much faster (between 100x and 10000x faster depending on the size of the input dictionary). Note that a current limitation of matchPDict is that it only works with a dictionary of DNA patterns where all the patterns have the same number of nucleotides (constant width dictionary). See ?matchPDict for more information.

Here is how our runAnalysis1 function can be modified in order to use matchPDict instead of match-Pattern:

```
pdict <- PDict(dict0)</pre>
      for (seqname in seqnames) {
+
          subject <- bsgenome[[seqname]]</pre>
          cat(">>> Finding all hits in strand", strand, "of chromosome", seqname, "...\n")
          mindex <- matchPDict(pdict, subject)</pre>
          matches <- extractAllMatches(subject, mindex)</pre>
          writeHits(seqname, matches, strand, file=outfile, append=append)
          append <- TRUE
+
          cat(">>> DONE\n")
+ }
> runAnalysis2 <- function(dict0, outfile="")</pre>
      library(BSgenome.Celegans.UCSC.ce2)
      seqnames <- seqnames(Celegans)</pre>
+
      runOneStrandAnalysis(dict0, Celegans, seqnames, "+", outfile=outfile, append=FALSE)
      runOneStrandAnalysis(dict0, Celegans, seqnames, "-", outfile=outfile, append=TRUE)
+ }
   Remember that matchPDict only works if all the patterns in the input dictionary have the same length
so for this 2nd analysis, we will truncate the patterns in ce2dict0 to 15 nucleotides:
> ce2dict0cw15 <- DNAStringSet(ce2dict0, end=15)</pre>
   Now we can run this 2nd analysis and put the results in the "ce2dict0cw15_ana2.txt" file:
> runAnalysis2(ce2dict0cw15, outfile="ce2dict0cw15_ana2.txt")
Target: strand + of ce2 chromosomes chrI, chrII, chrIII, chrIV, chrV, chrX, chrM
>>> Finding all hits in strand + of chromosome chrI ...
>>> DONE
>>> Finding all hits in strand + of chromosome chrII ...
>>> DONE
>>> Finding all hits in strand + of chromosome chrIII ...
>>> DONE
>>> Finding all hits in strand + of chromosome chrIV ...
>>> DONE
>>> Finding all hits in strand + of chromosome chrV ...
>>> Finding all hits in strand + of chromosome chrX ...
>>> Finding all hits in strand + of chromosome chrM ...
Target: strand - of ce2 chromosomes chrI, chrII, chrIII, chrIV, chrV, chrX, chrM
>>> Finding all hits in strand - of chromosome chrI ...
>>> DONE
>>> Finding all hits in strand - of chromosome chrII ...
>>> Finding all hits in strand - of chromosome chrIII ...
>>> DONE
>>> Finding all hits in strand - of chromosome chrIV ...
>>> DONE
```

- >>> Finding all hits in strand of chromosome chrV \dots
- >>> DONE
- >>> Finding all hits in strand of chromosome chrX ...
- >>> DONE
- >>> Finding all hits in strand of chromosome chrM ...
- >>> DONE

9 Session info

> sessionInfo()

R version 2.14.0 (2011-10-31)

Platform: x86_64-unknown-linux-gnu (64-bit)

locale:

- [1] LC_CTYPE=en_US.UTF-8 LC_NUMERIC=C
 [3] LC_TIME=en_US.UTF-8 LC_COLLATE=C
- [5] LC_MONETARY=en_US.UTF-8 LC_MESSAGES=en_US.UTF-8
- [7] LC_PAPER=C LC_NAME=C
 [9] LC_ADDRESS=C LC_TELEPHONE=C
- [11] LC_MEASUREMENT=en_US.UTF-8 LC_IDENTIFICATION=C

attached base packages:

[1] stats graphics grDevices utils datasets methods base

other attached packages:

- [1] BSgenome. Hsapiens. UCSC.hg19_1.3.17 hgu95av2probe_2.9.0
- [3] AnnotationDbi_1.16.0 Biobase_2.14.0
- [5] BSgenome.Celegans.UCSC.ce2_1.3.17 BSgenome_1.22.0
- [7] GenomicRanges_1.6.0 Biostrings_2.22.0
- [9] IRanges_1.12.0

loaded via a namespace (and not attached):

[1] DBI_0.2-5 RSQLite_0.10.0 tools_2.14.0